

I am Part of the Problem

As I sit around watching hero after hero, man after man, fall at the realization of their past indiscretions, I don't sit by and wonder "who will be next?" I wonder, "when will they come for me?"

You see, I've come to understand after months of these revelations, that I am not some innocent bystander, I am also a part of the problem.

I'm sure I'm not alone in this thought, but I can't blindly act as though I didn't somehow play a part in this, and if I'm going truly represent myself as someone who has built a career on finding the truth, then it's time for me to be truthful as well.

I am part of the problem.

Over my life, there have been many instances that parallel what we see everyday in the news. When I was in college, a girl who I hooked up with on a one night stand accused me of rape. Not outright. There were no charges or investigations, but she wrote about the instance in a short story writing class and called me by name. A female friend who was in the class told me about it afterwards.

I was floored.

"That's not what happened!" I told her. This wasn't how I remembered it at all. In my mind, we'd been drinking all night and went back to my room. We began fooling around, she pushed me off, then we laid in the bed and talked and laughed some more, and then began fooling around again. We took off our clothes. She said she didn't want to have sex, so we laid together, and talked, and kissed, and laughed, and then we started having sex.

"Light Bright," she said.

"What?"

"Light bright. That kids toy, that's all I can see and think about," she said ... and then she started to cry. I didn't know what to do. We stopped having sex and I rolled beside her. I tried to comfort her. To make her feel better. I thought I was doing ok, I believed she was feeling better. She believed she was raped.

That's why I'm part of the problem.

Then there was the time I settled a sexual harassment allegation at my office. This was around 8 years ago, and it wasn't a grossly feely harassment. It was verbal, and it was just as bad.

I would call my female assistant "hot pants" or "sex pants" when I was yelling to her from the other side of the office. Something I thought was funny at the time, but then realized I had completely demeaned and belittled her to a place of non-existence.

So, when she decided to quit, she came to me and said if I didn't pay her a settlement, she would tell everyone. Being who I was, it was the last thing I wanted, so of course, I paid. I paid for peace of mind. I paid for her silence and cooperation. Most of all, I paid so I could remain who I was.

I am part of the problem.

And then there's the infidelity. I have been unfaithful to every wife and girlfriend I have ever had. Over the years, I would look each of them in the eye and proclaim my love and then have sex with other people behind their backs.

I hurt them. And I hate it. But it didn't make me stop. The worst part is, I'm someone who consistently hurts those closest to me. From my wife, to my friends, to my family, to my partners & co-workers. I have helped create a world of disrespect through my own actions.

And I am part of the problem.

But why? What caused me to act this way? Is it all ego? Or was it the sexual abuse I suffered as a boy and as a young man in my teens? Abuse that I only ever told to my first wife, for fear of being seen as weak or less than a man?

Is it because my father left my mother when I was child? Or that she believed he never respected her, so that disrespect carried over into their son?

Or is it because I've consistently been drinking since the age of 13? I haven't been sober for more than a week in 30 years, something our society doesn't shun or condemn but which only served to fill the emotional hole inside me and the daily depression I coped with. Depression we can't talk about, because its wrong and makes you less of a person.

And the sexual dalliances? Were they meaningful? Or did they only serve to try to make a weak man feel stronger.

I don't know. None of these things matter when you chip away at someone and consistently make them feel like less of a person.

I am part of the problem. We all are.

But I am also part of the solution. By recognizing and openly admitting what I've done to further this terrible situation, I hope to empower the change within myself. We should all find the courage to admit we're at fault.

More than anything, I'm hopeful that I can start to rebuild the trust and the respect of those I love most. I'm not sure I deserve it, but I will work everyday to earn it back.

I will do better. I will be better. I believe we all can.

The only individual I have control over is me. So starting today, I'm going to be more honest with you and myself. I'm going to lay it all out in the open. Maybe that will be a start. Who knows. But I do know I've talked enough in my life ... I'm finally ready to listen